

SUNAPEE

# Corrections superintendent spells out new jail plan

## More than \$5M proposal intended to add space, security

By **CARL KEYSER**

ckeyser@arguschampion.com

An informational session was held at the Sunapee Safety Services Building on April 30 to discuss the proposed construction plans for a new jail and Community Corrections Center.

There are two different proposals to overhaul the jail that was built in 1978. The first proposal would cost just under \$5.8 million. That number includes renovations to the existing structure and to build a new Community Corrections Center on the property at a 44-bed capacity.

The second proposal includes the same \$1.4 million for upgrades to the existing facility,

plus an additional \$5.6 million for a Community Corrections Center that would have a 68-bed capacity.

Ross Cunningham, the superintendent for the county's department of corrections, said during the session that the improvements to the existing facility are extremely necessary.

"The current building we have was built in 1978 for a maximum of 44 offenders," Cunningham said. "Currently, we have 44 men at the facility that have been sentenced there, and five women. We have 39 male pre-trial inmates and 10 female pre-trial inmates. That means total population in-house is 98. That's over double what the building was built for 30

years ago."

Cunningham said when he started in August of last year he started discussing proposed building plans for the jail.

"There was a discussion of what direction the facility is going in for the future," Cunningham said. "What the plan originally boiled down to was a \$45 million proposal."

Cunningham said he took the plan home with him to try and find a way to cut down the costs.

"Rather than attach the Community Corrections Center to the facility, we moved it to the other end of the parking lot," he said.

The new Community Corrections Center proposal is a residential style building. It

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Sullivan County Department of Corrections superintendent

would still have the basic necessities to keep it secure, but in look and feel, Cunningham compared it to the Sunapee Safety Services Building.

"It'll have carpeting, it'll have ceiling tiles, but it will be a secure location," Cunningham said.

The center would be used for a drug and alcohol treatment

center, the first of its kind in the state, to be located adjacent to the corrections facility. The building would also be used to add beds to the facility.

Cunningham said the department is putting the cart in front of the horse in asking for more beds than are currently needed.

"We've got to establish secure beds for the future,"

Cunningham said. "We need to plan ahead to see what the future might look like. It's better to establish the bed space now than have to do it in the future. We need to be big enough to take on the offenders as they come through the system."

Sunapee State Rep. Sue Gottling organized the Wednesday informational meeting. She said she thought Cunningham and the department had some positive ideas and people needed to hear what they had to say.

"I wanted for this to be a public services information night for the town of Sunapee," Gottling said. "If you don't come learn what's going on you might just find that I voted for it and I don't want you getting mad with me if I do."

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